

# North Carolina State Parks



*Celebrating*  
**90 Years**  
*of Stewardship*



# Post Card.

*Over the past 90 years, the people of this great state have demonstrated foresight and wisdom in protecting exceptional natural resources and providing outstanding recreational opportunities through the North Carolina state park system, which attracts 13 million visitors each year. It is with great pride that I share this synopsis of our history and our recent accomplishments. I also commend to you the Friends of North Carolina State Parks organization and its support of our efforts. I hope you will have an opportunity to visit one of our parks in the very near future. I am sure you will find them to be "Naturally Wonderful."*

*Sincerely,*

*Lewis R. Ledford*

*Director, North Carolina State Parks & Recreation*



*To  
Present and Future  
Friend of State Parks*





## Our Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is to protect North Carolina's natural diversity; to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina; and to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

*We in North  
Carolina are  
blessed with  
beautiful beaches,  
majestic mountains  
and countless  
rivers and  
streams  
in between.*



# State Parks System History



- 1891** Geological Survey for North Carolina established to determine the nature and extent of mineral and timber resources.
- 1905** Geological Survey reorganized into the North Carolina Geological and Economic Survey. The survey examined mineral, forest, fish, and all other material resources of the state.
- 1916** **Championed by Governor Locke Craig, Mount Mitchell State Park, was authorized through legislation passed in 1916 and established with the initial land acquisition (purchase by the state) of 795 acres.**
- 1921** Division of Forestry created within the Geological and Economic Survey. Parks administered under the Division of Forestry.
- 1924** **Fort Macon State Park** established with a gift of land from federal government surplus property.
- 1925** G.S. 113-22 gave the Department of Conservation and Development control of **Mount Mitchell** and other state parks.
- 1929** Chapter 165 of General Statutes directed that state-owned lakes of 50 acres or more be administered, as provided for other recreation areas by the Department of Conservation and Development. **White Lake** and the following state lakes were established: Bay Tree, Waccamaw, Phelps, Singletary, Salters and Jones.
- Chapter 282 established policy that new park land would not be purchased by the state, but that "public spirited citizens" would purchase or donate land for park purposes.
- 1934** Civilian Conservation Corps and other federal public works programs began the expenditure of \$2.25 million for park development.
- 1935** **Morrow Mountain State Park** established from gifts of land from private individuals and Stanly County.
- 1936** The Recreation Area Study formed a list of requirements for establishing areas to be state parks. Requirements included natural beauty, recreation possibilities, statewide historic or scientific values, natural scenery, and locations near population centers.

**Hanging Rock State Park** established from a gift of land from private individuals.





- 1939** **Baytree Lake State Park** established from legislative reallocation of administrative authority. **Singletary Lake** and **Jones Lake State Park** were established initially as leases and then a land gift from federal government.
- 1940** Park, Parkway, and Recreation Area Study prepared a comprehensive plan for establishing the administration and operations of the state parks system. However, the study was not funded as World War II directed attention from the parks.
- 1945** **Cliffs of the Neuse State Park** established from a gift of land from a private individual. The North Carolina Recreation Commission – the country's first – was established.
- 1947** The General Assembly appropriated \$50,000 for the construction of public facilities. Appropriation was marked as the first state park capital improvement appropriation. **Pettigrew State Park** established as first a lease and then a gift of land from the federal government.
- 1948** State parks elevated to divisional status within the Department of Conservation and Development.
- 1949** The General Assembly appropriated \$1,074,144 to the Division of Parks for the purchase of small tracts of land within park boundaries, and for the construction of roads, parking areas, and other types of facilities.
- 1951** **Kerr Lake Reservoir** opened under the Kerr Reservoir Development Commission, as a lease from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
- 1955** The General Assembly transferred historic sites from the Division of Parks to the newly formed Department of Archives and History to allow the Division of Parks to concentrate on recreational and scenic values.
- 1956** **Mount Jefferson State Park** (later redesignated as a State Natural Area) established with a gift of land from private individuals and the Town of West Jefferson.
- 1961** **Hammocks Beach State Park** established with a gift of land from the North Carolina Teachers' Association and the Hammocks Beach Corp.
- 1962** **Duke Power State Park** established with a gift of land from Duke Power Co. (Later renamed Lake Norman State Park)
- 1963** The Board of Conservation and Development adopted principles for state natural areas.

**Weymouth Woods State Nature Preserve** established with gift of land from a private individual.



A Portion of the Gardens, Weymouth Woods, Southern Pines, N. C.





- 1965** Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federally funded program to provide matching funds for park land acquisition and development, was created.
- 1967** State Parks and State Forest Study Commission created by the General Assembly to examine outdoor recreation. The study recommended purchasing new parks, upgrading existing facilities, and expanding staff.
- 1968-1971**  
**Pilot Mountain State Park** established with purchase of land using funds raised by local support group and Appalachian Regional Commission to match grant from LWCF. **Stone Mountain State Park** established with a gift of land from the N.C. Granite Corporation. Funds from the Appalachian Regional Commission also used to match LWCF grant. **Carolina Beach State Park** established with purchase of land by state. **Raven Rock State Park** established with purchase of land using LWCF grant funds matched with state funds. **Bushy Lake State Natural Area** established by administrative reallocation of authority.
- 1972** "Now or Never" report identified potential park lands, lost opportunities, and highlighted the need for action. State Parks, Kerr Reservoir, and the Recreation Commission merged under the Department of Natural and Economic Resources as the Office of Recreation Resources. Natural and Scenic Rivers System Act passed. North Carolina Environmental Policy Act passed.
- Theodore Roosevelt State Natural Area** established with a gift of land from the Roosevelt heirs.
- 1972** A constitutional amendment to conserve and protect North Carolina's natural resources was passed.
- 1973** North Carolina Trails System Act passed. The General Assembly appropriated \$11.5 million for new park lands and \$2.4 million to improve existing facilities. **Crowders Mountain, Eno River, Medoc Mountain, Merchants Millpond state parks** are established.
- 1974** **Dismal Swamp** and **Chowan Swamp state natural areas** and **Goose Creek State Park** were established.
- 1975** The General Assembly appropriated \$5.5 million for park lands and \$3 million for capital improvements. **Jockey's Ridge** and **South Mountains state parks** were established.
- 1976** **Linville River** designated as a component of the Natural and Scenic River System.
- Hemlock Bluffs, Masonboro Island** and **Mitchell's Mill** state natural areas and **Lake Waccamaw State Park** were established.
- 1977** **New River State Park** established and designated as a component of the Natural and Scenic River System.



**1979** "New Directions" report from the second State Park Study Commission (created in 1977) recommended expanding existing parks, increasing recreational activities and staffing, and increasing revenues generated by parks. A five-year plan was outlined.

**Baldhead Island State Natural Area** established with a gift of land from The Nature Conservancy.

**1982** **Jordan Reservoir State Recreation Area** opened with lease from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**1983** **Falls Reservoir State Recreation Area** opened with lease from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

**1984** Third State Parks Study Commission concluded that insufficient funds existed for acquiring critical lands; that 50-year old park buildings needed repairs; and that the system was understaffed and rangers were underpaid.

**1985** State Goals and Policy Board made six recommendations for action to reverse deplorable condition of parks. General Assembly appropriated \$25 million for land acquisition. Subsequent adjustments in the appropriation diverted some funds to other purposes.

**1986** **Fort Fisher State Recreation Area** was established, and **Horsepasture River** was designated as a component of the Natural and Scenic River System.

**1987** The 4th State Parks and Recreation Area Study Commission recommended establishing a trust fund to purchase and manage land. At the behest of Gov. James G. Martin, the General Assembly passed the State Parks Act. The act defined the mission and purpose of the State Parks System and called for a system plan to be submitted to the General Assembly. A State Auditor's report made recommendations which included staffing, funding, land acquisition, and capital improvements.

The General Assembly created the North Carolina Natural Heritage Trust Fund to provide supplemental funding for the acquisition and protection of important natural areas, to preserve the state's ecological diversity and cultural heritage, and to inventory the natural heritage resources of the state.

**Lake James State Park** became the first state park established under the new State Parks Act. Funding was appropriated for land, capital improvements, staff and operating budget.

At the direction of Gov. Martin, State Parks initiated a commitment to bring environmental education and interpretation to the lives of all the state's citizens, particularly school children.

**1988** In response to the recommendations of a multi-agency task force, the first group of state park rangers was commissioned as fully trained and certified state law enforcement officers. Commissioning rangers as special peace officers had been restricted by the administration since the mid-1970s due to costs associated with mandated training.







**1989** The General Assembly charged the N.C. Department of Transportation with maintaining the state park road system. \$500,000 per annum is allocated for this purpose.

Fifth State Parks and Recreational Areas Study Commission recommended capital improvements of \$20 million over an eight-year period and additional staff to support construction projects, planning, land acquisition and the rivers and trails programs.

**Lumber River State Park** established and designated as a component of the Natural and Scenic River System.

**1993** \$35 million bond referendum passed.

**1994** The General Assembly established the Park and Recreation Trust Fund with the support of Gov. James B. Hunt.

**1995** **Run Hill** and **Occoneechee Mountain state natural areas** were established.

**1996** The General Assembly created the Clean Water Management Trust Fund in order to issue grants to local governments, state agencies and conservation non-profits to help finance projects that specifically address water pollution problems.

**1997** The **Gorges State Park** was established.

**1998** The federal government designated the **New River** as an American Heritage River and designated 81 miles of the **Lumber River** as a Wild and Scenic River.

**1999** The General Assembly amended the State Nature and Historic Preserve Act, and dedicated property in the State Parks System into the State Nature and Historic Preserve. The bills provided important recognition and protection for significant natural areas in the State Parks System.

**2000** During a ceremony adding 1,300 acres to **Crowders Mountain State Park**, Gov. Jim Hunt announced his plan to preserve an additional million acres of open space in the state by 2010. Later that year, Hunt signed legislation putting the goals of his "Million Acre Initiative" into state law.

**2001** 2,500 acres were purchased from International Paper Co. and added to **Lumber River State Park**. Significant land purchases were also made in 2001 to expand and protect areas of **Crowders Mountain**, **Hanging Rock**, **Morrow Mountain**, **Stone Mountain**, **William B. Umstead**, **Raven Rock** and **South Mountains state parks**.

**Lea Island State Natural Area** was established. Museums dedicated to environmental education were completed at **Mount Mitchell** and **William B. Umstead state parks** and **Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve**. A visitor center at **Hammocks Beach**, a community center at **Lake Norman** and an equestrian center at **South Mountains** were completed.



- 2002** DENR unveils "One North Carolina Naturally," a new statewide land and water protection initiative established to guide North Carolina's future conservation efforts. The "One North Carolina Naturally" initiative was established to lead the development and implementation of a comprehensive statewide conservation plan involving government agencies, private organizations, landowners and the public.
- 2003** The division launched its "New Parks for a New Century" initiative in conjunction with DENR's One North Carolina Naturally program. The planning effort identified 47 sites in North Carolina as potential additions to the parks system as state parks, recreation areas or natural areas. Two of the 13 potential state parks identified were authorized by the General Assembly in the **Haw** and **Mayo river corridors**, and natural areas were established at **Elk Knob** and **Beech Creek Bog**.

A new exhibit hall was built at **Hammocks Beach** and exhibits and the restoration at **Fort Macon** were completed. The four-year restoration at **Fort Macon** was the largest single capital project in the division's history at \$12.3 million.

- 2004** Gov. Easley authorized the purchase of 2,915 acres in Burke County for \$18.3 million to expand **Lake James State Park** by nearly six times its current size, protecting key natural resources and boosting tourism and recreational opportunities. A 531-acre acquisition on the western side of the **Mayo River** in Rockingham County provided the first property for the new state park.

A bathhouse and picnic complex were completed at **Hammocks Beach** and an exhibit hall was built at **Crowders Mountain**.

- 2005** The New Parks for a New Century initiative moved forward with the General Assembly's authorization of new state parks at **Carver Creek** in Cumberland County and at **Hickory Nut Gorge** in Rutherford County. The division purchased the former Browns Summit Center in Rockingham County as part of **Haw River State Park** and created the state parks system's second regional environmental education center and the first with overnight accommodations.

A new visitor center with exhibits was completed at **Jones Lake**.

As part of a special agreement, 454 acres, known as the School for the Deaf Watershed, were transferred to **South Mountains State Park**, where an environmental education center designed for people with disabilities will be developed.

- 2006** Gov. Easley requested and the General Assembly approved \$15 million for the expansion of **Hickory Nut Gorge State Park**.

**The Mountain Bogs** (Sugar Mountain and Pineola) and **Sandy Run Savannas** were authorized as state natural areas.





# State Parks System Accomplishments

## 2005

1. The division forged ahead on the New Parks for a New Century initiative with the General Assembly's authorization of new state parks at Carver Creek in Cumberland County and at Hickory Nut Gorge in Rutherford County. The division is acquiring key properties for both parks with the help of land conservancies and the state's three conservation trust funds.

Using grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, the division added the former Browns Summit Center in Rockingham County into Haw River State Park. The center will be the state parks system's second regional environmental education center. Land acquisition efforts continue at the new Mayo River State Park, also in Rockingham County, with its size doubled in the past year to 1,588 acres.

2. Significant land acquisitions at existing state park units in 2005 included more than 2,500 acres purchased and donated to create a new Scuppernong River Section at Pettigrew State Park in Washington and Tyrell counties. This important conservation effort along one of the state's last undeveloped river corridors protects rare species and habitat. The division also acquired 785 acres at Elk Knob State Natural Area in Watauga and Ashe counties. And, 113 acres (former Eure property) were added at William B. Umstead State Park.
3. A new 6,273 square-foot visitor center and extensive renovations to related visitor facilities at Jones Lake State Park in Bladen County were completed. Also, new visitor centers are being constructed at New River, South Mountains and Merchants Millpond state parks. A new access area providing day-use recreation and overnight camping is now available to the public along the Lumber River in Scotland County. And, overnight camping facilities at Stone Mountain State Park in Wilkes County were significantly expanded.





4. The division launched a major planning effort for 2,914 acres purchased in 2004 from Crescent Resources Inc. and added to Lake James State Park. The acquisition, representing about 30 miles of shoreline, protects critical watershed and viewshed areas in Burke County and provides room for much-needed recreation facilities.
5. A record \$13.7 million was channeled into local park acquisition and improvement projects through 50 grants from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund, administered by the division. In the 11-year history of the fund, more than \$74 million has been awarded through 422 matching grants to municipal and county recreation programs in all areas of the state.
6. North Carolina's state parks system was one of four finalists for the 2005 Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management presented by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration. The Gold Medal Awards are considered the most prestigious in the field of parks and recreation management. The division was judged on 11 criteria including the quality of long-range planning, the response to population and economic trends, the extent of citizen support, the quality of natural resource protection and the types of services to special population groups.

### 2006 (interim)

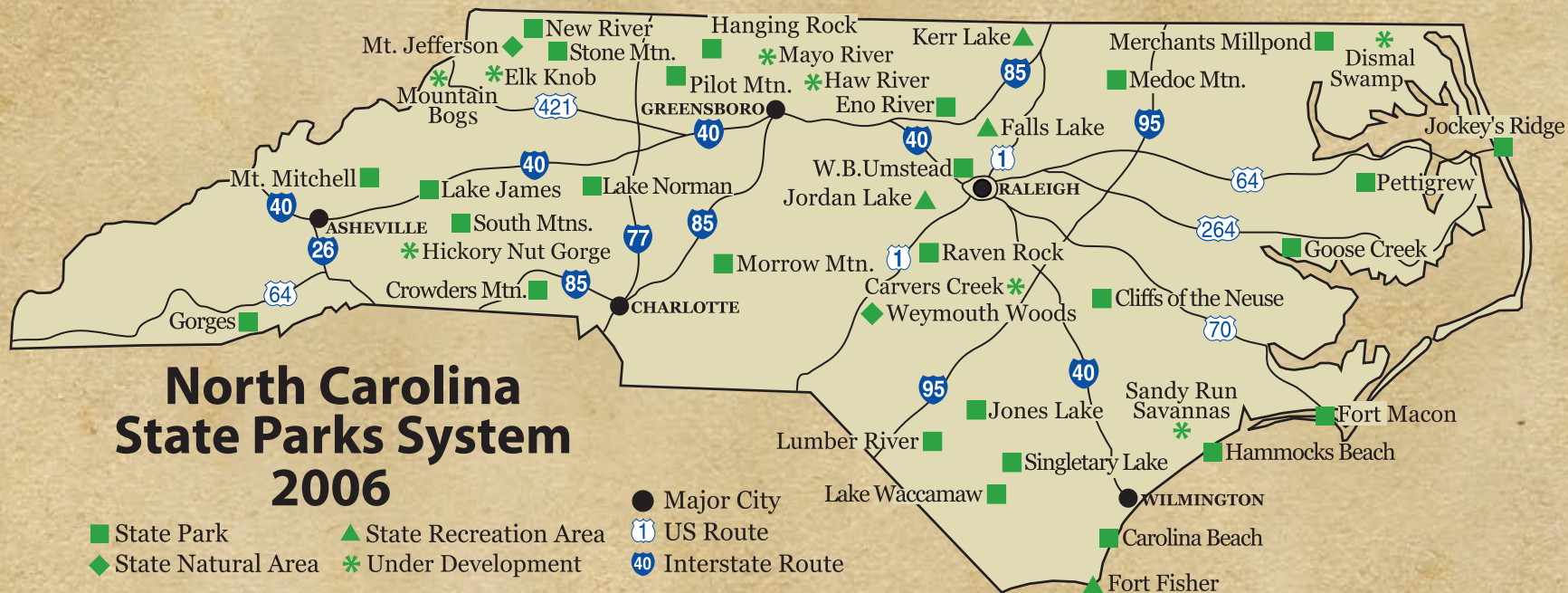
1. The General Assembly appropriated \$15 million to support land acquisition at Hickory Nut Gorge State Park in Rutherford County.
2. Two rare and highly sensitive types of ecosystems were added to the state parks system during the 2006 General Assembly. Legislators authorized the Mountain Bog State Natural Area in Avery County and Sandy Run Savannas State Natural Area in Pender and Onslow counties. The clusters of mountain bogs and savannas are identified as important additions in the division's New Parks for a New Century initiative, which surveys all known significant sites in the state.





# North Carolina State Parks System 2006

- State Park
- ◆ State Natural Area
- ▲ State Recreation Area
- \* Under Development
- Major City
- 1 US Route
- 40 Interstate Route





Carolina Beach 910-458-8206 carolina.beach@ncmail.net  
 Cliffs of the Neuse 919-778-6234 cliffs.neuse@ncmail.net  
 Crowders Mountain 704-853-5375 crowders.mountain@ncmail.net  
 Dismal Swamp 252-771-6593 dismal.swamp@ncmail.net  
 Elk Knob 828-297-7261 elk.knob@ncmail.net  
 Eno River 919-383-1686 eno.river@ncmail.net  
 Falls Lake 919-676-1027 falls.lake@ncmail.net  
 Fort Fisher 910-458-5798 fort.fisher@ncmail.net  
 Fort Macon 252-726-3775 fort.macon@ncmail.net  
 Goose Creek 252-923-2191 goose.creek@ncmail.net  
 Gorges 828-966-9099 gorges@ncmail.net  
 Hammocks Beach 910-326-4881 hammocks.beach@ncmail.net  
 Hanging Rock 336-593-8480 hanging.rock@ncmail.net  
 Haw River (please contact The Summit) 336-342-6163 summit.center@ncmail.net  
 Jockey's Ridge 252-441-7132 jockeys.ridge@ncmail.net  
 Jones Lake 910-588-4550 jones.lake@ncmail.net  
 Jordan Lake 919-362-0586 jordan.lake@ncmail.net  
 Kerr Lake 252-438-7791 kerr.lake@ncmail.net  
 Lake James 828-652-5047 lake.james@ncmail.net  
 Lake Norman 704-528-6350 lake.norman@ncmail.net  
 Lake Waccamaw 910-646-4748 lake.waccamaw@ncmail.net  
 Lumber River 910-628-9844 lumber.river@ncmail.net  
 Medoc Mountain 252-586-6588 medoc.mountain@ncmail.net  
 Merchants Millpond 252-357-1191 merchants.millpond@ncmail.net  
 Morrow Mountain 704-982-4402 morrow.mountain@ncmail.net  
 Mount Jefferson 336-246-9653 mount.jefferson@ncmail.net  
 Mount Mitchell 828-675-4611 mount.mitchell@ncmail.net  
 New River 336-982-2587 new.river@ncmail.net  
 Pettigrew 252-797-4475 pettigrew@ncmail.net  
 Pilot Mountain 336-325-2355 pilot.mountain@ncmail.net  
 Raven Rock 910-893-4888 info.ravenrock@ncmail.net  
 Singletary Lake 910-669-2928 singletary.lake@ncmail.net  
 South Mountains 828-433-4772 south.mountains@ncmail.net  
 Stone Mountain 336-957-8185 stone.mountain@ncmail.net  
 The Summit at Haw River State Park 336-342-6163 summit.center@ncmail.net  
 Weymouth Woods 910-692-2167 weymouth.woods@ncmail.net  
 William B. Umstead 919-571-4170 william.umstead@ncmail.net

## State Parks Contact Information





# State Parks Milestones

## **Directors of the North Carolina State Parks and Recreation System**

July 1945-June 1950  
**Dr. Harold D. Meyers\***

July 1950-June 1955  
**Ralph J. Andrews\***

July 1955-June 1961  
**Thomas W. Morse**

July 1961-February 1974  
**Thomas C. Ellis**

February 1974-May 1977  
**Ronald D. Johnson**

June 1977-January 1985  
**James S. Stevens Jr.**

March 1985-December 1989  
**Dr. William W. Davis**

January 1990-January 2004  
**Dr. Philip K. McKnelly**

February 2004-Present  
**Lewis R. Ledford**

\*N.C. Recreation Commission

The threefold mission of the state parks system - to conserve North Carolina's natural resources, to educate citizens about those resources, and to promote quality recreation - is grounded in the State Parks Act of 1987. The act declares it appropriate that a state parks system be established and defines state parks, natural areas and recreation areas as well as state trails, rivers and lakes.

In 1972, North Carolinians took an exceptional step in voting for a constitutional amendment supporting land and water preservation. As a result, language was added to the State Constitution that set out North Carolina's responsibility for protecting natural resources.

The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund was created by the N.C. General Assembly in 1994 and provides dedicated funding to carry out the mandates of the State Constitution and State Parks Act. The trust fund is supported by a portion of the state's tax on real estate deeds transfers. The Parks and Recreation Authority, appointed by the governor and the legislature, makes decisions on how the trust fund is to be distributed under guidelines set out by law. In its 11-year history, more than 25,000 acres of land and water have been protected within the state parks system, and the trust fund has supported more than 400 local park projects.

The Natural Heritage Program, formed in 1976 (formalized in state statute in 1985) through a partnership with The Nature Conservancy and supported by a Land and Water Conservation Fund grant, is a vital link to the state park system. The program inventories, catalogues, and supports conservation of the rarest and the most outstanding elements of the natural diversity of our state. The trust fund is supported by 25 percent of the state's portion of the tax on real estate deed transfers and by a portion of the fees for personalized license plates.

The state trails and natural and scenic river programs are key parts of the state park system. The State Trails Program originated in 1973 with the North Carolina Trails System Act. It is dedicated to helping citizens, organizations and agencies plan, develop and manage all types of trails. Under the Natural and Scenic Rivers Program, rivers or river segments are protected upon designation by restrictions on projects such as dams, reservoirs, and water resource projects that would have direct and adverse effects.



# Friends of State Parks

North Carolina's Friends of State Parks is an all-volunteer group dedicated to the understanding, enjoyment, and protection of North Carolina's State Parks.

FSP supports the N.C. Parks System by promoting and raising awareness of the system's mission: "to protect and manage the unique biological, geological, archeological, recreational, and scenic resources of the state."

FSP also fosters and engenders an atmosphere of appreciation and support for the division's 500-member staff who are the stewards of our "Best in the Nation" state parks system. Our state park staff achieve national recognition with the second lowest per capita investment in state parks in the Southeast.

Resources to finance exhibits, publications, division programs such as the Junior Ranger program, milestone recognitions, most notably the 75th and 90th anniversary celebrations, educational opportunities for ranger staff, and legislative advocacy are derived from membership dues, grants, private donations and the sale of FSP sponsored publications.

As the division plans for and addresses the needs of more than 12 million annual visitors to our naturally diverse park system and envisions the changes and challenges facing what will be the seventh most populous state in the nation in the year 2020, FSP stands in partnership to make the efforts more easily achievable.

We need your voices and hands to support all these key efforts and to help make the visions of "New Parks for a New Century" a reality.

Join us today by completing the enclosed membership application along with tax-deductible dues and/or donations.

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, state of North Carolina chartered organization.

We invite you to learn more about Friends of State Parks by visiting our website at [www.ncfsp.org](http://www.ncfsp.org).

Sincerely,  
John Graham, President  
Friends of State Parks







conservation  
environmental education  
recreation